

# Gender as a category of analysis in the social sciences

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## Abstract

Gender is a broader category than the simple distinction between the sexes – it shows the relationship and the influence of social institutions on perceptions and the development through socialization of femininity and masculinity. The term *gender* is not clearly understood, making it necessary to accurately define the category that will be used in the studies carried out in the framework of the 'Innovative Gender' as a New Source of Progress project. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a definition of gender which can become the basis of the concept of *innovative gender*. To this end, we show the origins of the concept of gender as established in psychology. Then, considerations are transferred to the social sciences, which introduces a new aspect, namely the concepts of gender are shifted to the level of social relations from the previously studied level of the individual. In the social sciences, economics is highlighted, and the opportunities that the introduction to this science of the analysis of gender are opening up.

**Key words:** gender, psychology, social sciences, economics

## Introduction

The term "gender" is not clearly understood, both in society and scientific considerations it appears with numerous interpretations. Gender can be translated as the differentiation between women and men, as the social relations established in the differences between the sexes, or as a set of specific characteristics attributed to individuals. This ambiguity makes it necessary to accurately define the category that will be used in the studies carried out in the framework of the 'Innovative Gender' as a New Source of Progress project. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a definition of gender which can become the basis for the concept of innovative gender.

The first part of the chapter presents the genesis of the concept of gender established in psychology and disseminated by the feminist movement. This section focuses on the achievements of the psychological sciences. In the second section,

considerations are transferred to the social sciences, which introduces a new aspect, namely the concepts of gender are shifted to the level of social relations from the previously studied level of the individual. In the social sciences, economics is highlighted, and the opportunities that the introduction to this science of the analysis of gender are opening up. The chapter ends with a short presentation of the research on Innovative Gender and the definition of gender used in this research.

## 1.1. Gender – genesis<sup>1</sup>

In English, the terms sex and gender can be used interchangeably. However, since the 1970s, thanks to the psychologist Rhoda Unger, the concept of gender in the social sciences and humanities has gone beyond the traditional understanding and taken on a new dimension. Unger recognized that there is a need to distinguish between biologically determined sex, closely related to the characteristics of genital anatomy, sex hormones and chromosomes (sex), and gender, as determined by culture, attributing the word 'gender' that can be used to describe those components of sex that are not associated with human biology, but normally considered masculine or feminine attributes (Unger, 1979).

The need to introduce two separate terms (sex and gender) relating to masculinity and femininity to science has its origins, *inter alia*, in the approach to research and reflection on gender differences at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, often biased to the disadvantage of women. In the field of psychology, it was leading and renowned psychologists, such as Edward Thorndike and Sigmund Freud, who argued in their publications for the inferiority of women to men in intellectual, emotional, moral and physical terms (in: Brannon, 2002, pp. 24–30; Bem, 2000, pp. 63–66). Most researchers drew on biology while claiming this, simultaneously ignoring the issues of education and related cultural factors, or even the interaction between nature and the environment in shaping the individual. Such an approach was, on the one hand, the result of even more unequal relationships between woman and man than is currently the case, and on the other contributed to the strengthening of existing gender stereotypes, as well as the conviction of a clear division between typically female and male roles inherent in nature; there was also a strong argument against the admission of women to fields previously reserved for men, such as politics,<sup>2</sup>

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1 The concept of gender has grown on the basis of Western culture, hence most of the discussion on this topic in this paper refers to the same cultural background.

2 Women gained the right to vote in 1869 in Wyoming, a year later in Utah, in the United Kingdom women over 30 years of age were given the right to vote in 1918, the same year as women in independent Poland. American women were granted the right to vote two years later. More on how the right to vote was obtained and the development of women's movements, see Sanders, 2001; Ślęczka, 1999; Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2006.

science,<sup>3</sup> or even sports. On the other hand, increasingly active feminists objected to such a perspective, and the number of women scientists started to grow, challenging the methods and sometimes the validity of the study of gender differences, as well as some of the findings or their interpretation relating to this subject (Shields, 1975; Unger, 1979). In this instance, psychologists made an important contribution: Helen Bradford Thompson and Leta Stetter Hollingworth (in: Benjamin, 2008), whose very diligent research in the early twentieth century undermined the general perception of significant heterogeneity (in favour of the male) between men and women in terms of a variety of physical and psychological factors (speed of learning, motor fatigue, memory, etc.). In the ensuing period of activity of feminist movements and research on the issue of gender differences, attention was also drawn to the limitations and implications posed by the “traditional” division of social roles (Bem, 2000).

For women, the effect of imposing roles due to biology was to block their path to an education, and a further consequence of its exercise in the fields of academia was the belief that they were less intelligent than men and lost valuable energy that should be spent on motherhood.<sup>4</sup> Economists, too, saw a threat to women’s maternal functions if they took paid work. Therefore, Pigou and Marshall were supporters of a total ban on the employment of mothers (Pujol, 1995, pp. 20–24; Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2012, p. 310). Another burning issue which the suffragettes fought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the barring of women’s access to politics and the possibility of co-decision on the fate of the country/community in which they lived. It should be noted, however, that the negative consequences of rigidly binding social roles with biological sex lie not just with women. The widespread belief in the superiority of females over males regarding suitability to care for children results in the not always fair judgments of family courts, who in cases of judgments on parental rights entrust the vast majority these to mothers, to the displeasure of some fathers.<sup>5</sup>

The increasing emancipation of women combined with the growing awareness of the obstacles and limitations originating in gender prejudices and stereotypes, often based on the belief of the crucial role of biology in shaping the individual,

3 In the UK, the first College for women opened in 1869 in Hitchin, in 1873 in Girton College, Cambridge. However, the degrees awarded to women in Cambridge were equated with the titles awarded to men in 1948. The first German universities began to accept women in 1901. In Poland, the first female students were given the right to participate in classes at the University of Jan Kazimierz Lwów and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in 1895. However, the latter university did not employ Maria Skłodowska, who was trying to take work in Kraków after graduation in Paris. For more information, see: Sanders, 2001, and Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2006.

4 E. Clarke’s concept, included in his book *Sex in Education* (1873), was supported by H. Spencer, one of the leading philosophers of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or G.S. Hall, acclaimed psychologist, the first president of the American Psychological Association (following: Bem, 2000).

5 Fathers’ opposition to judgments in which parental rights are granted mainly to women is reflected in numerous associations and organizations for the rights of the father, e.g. the Central Association and Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Father, [Dzielnytata.pl](http://Dzielnytata.pl), [TataDzieciom.org](http://TataDzieciom.org), Fundacja Ojców Pokrzywdzonych przez Sądy, and many others.

his/her behaviours, attitudes, needs, etc., led to the concept of what is today called 'gender'. In psychology, the term refers primarily to the characteristics and behaviours that in a given culture are seen as suitable for a man or woman (Brannon, 2002, p. 42). The American Psychological Association defines gender more broadly – as acquired characteristics – the attributes, attitudes, social roles and behaviours assigned to boys and men or girls and women by the wider culture (APA, 2013). That set of features will include various aspects of personality such as "masculine" assertiveness and "feminine" passivity, temperament, e.g. "feminine" lability and "masculine" emotional stability, or intelligence. In turn, behaviours relate to how people react in different situations, e.g. aggression in males and female tears. Attributes are defined here as the properties associated with a particular sex, and may refer to psychological traits (above), associated with the physiognomy (breasts for women, beards for men), or objects, such as gender-appropriate clothing and accessories. However, that which stands out as part of gender are the roles assigned to men and women, not because of their individual capabilities, but allied to predispositions – allegedly biologically determined.

The clear division of roles has been tried and tested for millennia in a much less complicated way, though paradoxically – because of the more numerous risks to life and the more difficult circumstances compared with the current, wherein physical strength and endurance (the domain of the male) and "the number of hands" to work, to defend against the enemy or to war (the reproductive function of women) were the basis of existence, representing the survival of the community and the individuals associated with it. Currently, due to social, political, and economic changes, in the age of information and modern technology, in the most developed countries, mental abilities (including the creative thinking underlying innovation) and the 'soft' skills that can earn you high social status and independence take on special value. Gender differences regarding the intellectual capacity of women and men, contrary to the common belief of a large part of scientists from the turn of the previous century, if they even exist (inconsistent research results) are small, and to a greater extent refer to specific abilities (structure of intelligence) than the general intellectual level. The soft skills are acquired and more dependent on personality, not gender, so assigning e.g. caring abilities to women and leadership to men is a mistake, reducing the possibility of individual development. In conclusion, the rigid division of social roles does not have as strong a foundation as in the past, and locking the individual into the framework of biological sex can lead to non-use of their full potential.

It should be noted that the term 'gender' is a relatively fluid concept, depending as it does on changing culture. As over the years the professed system of values changes (e.g. Generations X, Y, Z), the patterns of behaviour associated with this or that role, or age (e.g. passive vs. active lifestyle, the growing number of over-sixties), in the same way it will touch on categories closely associated with culture, such as gender (see Hoffman and Borders research, 2001).

In the psychological literature, there is also the concept of gender identity, which is the identification of oneself as a representative of the female or male

(Brannon, 2001, p. 210).<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of research on gender differences, gender was considered one-dimensional, where one pole meant masculinity, the second – femininity. Any deviation from the biological sex at that time was treated at the same time as a pathology (after: Bem, 2000). The first tool for investigating the level of masculinity-femininity (M-F test) was constructed in the 1930s by Terman and Miles. Further questionnaires examining masculinity and femininity, in terms of the basic assumptions, differed little from their version, treating it one-dimensionally, as one aspect of personality.<sup>7</sup>

In the 70s and 80s, the subject of gender, on a wave of popularity, developed theories in which even the gender dichotomy between male and female was questioned, where the largest contribution was a psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem (1974, 1976, 2000). In her view, each unit may have (or claim to) the characteristics of both male and female, and thus fit within one of four groups:

- whose psychological gender is consistent with biological sex (“manly men” – “female women”),
- manifesting characteristics different from their own biological sex (“masculine women” – “feminine men”),
- showing no (or little) of the characteristics of either sex (undifferentiated type/indefinite),
- having characteristics commonly attributed to both men and women (defined as androgynous type).

Such an understanding of gender identity is relatively fixed, and to some extent independent of biological sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Table 1.1 contains characteristics that, on the basis of 600 characteristics, as a result of a suitable research procedure, have been assigned to the highest degree of masculinity and femininity. Items which received roughly the same number of points are included in a neutral group (Bem, 1974). The final results are shown in Table 1.1.

It should be noted that the set of defining characteristics of masculinity or femininity fixed by Bem and associates refers only to American culture and a few decades ago. Today, ongoing research is making changes to this list – a good portion of the characteristics decisively attributed to masculinity or femininity are becoming more neutral character (e.g. Hoffman and Borders, 2001). An additional variable to include would be the cultural factor – whether the same features would be assigned to masculinity and femininity by representatives of different countries, nationalities, religions, etc., and how much.

The concept of gender was a simple reaction to the unequal treatment of women next to men, and leading their social function primarily to motherhood, raising children, and taking care of the home. At the same time the role of mother, wife, housekeeper, nanny, were deprecated and/or roles played by men as head/

6 In Polish literature the concept functions of psychological gender (e.g. Kuczyńska, 1992, 2002; Szpitalak and Prochwicz, 2013), which seems to be the same as the term *gender identity*.

7 Masculinity-Femininity is one of the dimensions of personality questionnaires examined by, for example, the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory).

**Table 1.1.** Characteristics assigned to one psychological gender tool using the BSRI (Bem Sex-Role Inventory)

<b>Masculinity</b>	<b>Femininity</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
Independence	Tractability	Willingness to help
Defending their views	Serenity	Sorrow
Confidence in their own strength	Shyness	Conscientiousness
Athleticism	Tenderness	Theatricality
Assertiveness	Adulation	Happiness
Strong personality	Loyalty	Unpredictability
Effectiveness	Femininity	Reliability
Analyticity	Friendliness	Jealousy
Leadership tendencies	Sensitivity to the needs of others	Truthfulness
Willingness to take risks	Forbearance	Mystery
Ease in decision-making	Compassion	Sincerity
Self-sufficiency	The desire to mitigate hurtful feelings	Conceit
Domination	Mild tongued	Pleasant disposition
Masculinity	Warmth	Seriousness
The desire to take a stance	Delicacy	Friendly attitude
Aggressiveness	Naivety	Incompetence
Leadership activities	Childlike	Adaptability
Individualism	Non use of harsh language	Inconsistency
Competition	Love of children	Tact
Ambition	Gentleness	Conventionality

Source: E. Głażewska (2001). "Androgynia – model człowieka XXI wieku," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, Lublin – Polonia, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, p. 22.

breadwinner/leader/warrior were elevated.<sup>8</sup> This order was also supported by scientists<sup>9</sup> (mostly men) through not always reliable studies, or misinterpretation of the results. Feminist achievements such as winning the right to vote or ever wider access to education among women and their participation in science, coupled with socioeconomic changes that were favourable for them – a growing demand for professions that did not require physical strength, which allowed some women to taste the independence offered by "their own" money, in addition to stimulating the appetite for better paid and more prestigious jobs (Sanders, 2001; Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2006). And here again, they encountered resistance

8 According to Bem (2000), this is not about the fact that for some reason a gender is better or worse, but the establishment *a priori* of a certain standard, whose determinant is masculinity. Any deviation from this standard is regarded as a departure from the ideal.

9 It should be noted that to this day, science indicates a relatively strong inequality between men and women, see chapters included in this volume.

in obtaining higher and more responsible positions, which in the literature has been called the “glass ceiling.”<sup>10</sup>

Psychologists, in the formation of what was already being called gender theory, played a very significant role, undermining of the research related to gender differences, the results of which were usually interpreted in favour of males. In their research on gender they focus on issues related to the essence and causes of the differences in terms of cognitive processes, intelligence, emotions, personality, sexuality, education and upbringing, and even the psychopathology and treatment of mental disorders, as well as functioning in the working environment, and interpersonal relations (see: Brannon, 2002). In this, they pay far more attention than 100–150 years ago to environmental factors in the development and shaping of the individual, with particular emphasis on prejudices and stereotypes, emphasizing the negative consequences of closing the individual within the framework of their role. However, the term gender does not just operate in the field of psychology. Increasingly, it is used in the context of other disciplines.

## 1.2. The category of gender in the social sciences, with particular emphasis on economics

The concept of gender in the social sciences, as in psychology, is different from the concept of biological sex, and refers to the socially constructed roles, learned behaviours, and expectations of women and men. However, in the social sciences, including economics, gender is interpreted not only as a property of individuals, but also as a social phenomenon (Bradley, 2008, p. 11). Gender is the social importance given to biological differences between the sexes (Ferber, Nelson, 1993, pp. 9–10, for: Dijkstra and Plantega, 2003). By using this term, we focus on the system of social relations that produce the differences between men and women (Klamer, 1992, p. 323, for: Dijkstra and Plantega, 2003). Gender thus refers to a social phenomenon, the processes of creating a socio-cultural models of *femininity* and *masculinity*, and above all, the corresponding patterns of social roles (Klimowicz et al., 2009, p. 14).

Gender refers to the diverse and complex relationships between men and women, including the reproductive system, the division of labour based on gender and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity. It is to draw attention to the cultural superstructure of biological sex, to the complex of attributes and behaviours expected of men and women and seen as useful in their social functioning (Titkow, 2011, pp. 38–39). The primary function of gender is to articulate the social organization of gender differences. Organization understood as the principles of

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10 More on this in Titkow (2003).

providing the meaning and scope of these differences, and consequently constituting the rules that define relationships between men and women in a given culture and society (p. 40). Gender is socially constructed, and is used by people as a structuring element of the world they perceive, giving it a specific meaning. A simple statement like “she’s a woman,” or “he’s a man” does not tell us anything about their sex beyond the accepted dimension of biological sex. This meaning of gender has a specific value and is used as a variable in social studies (Bradley, 2008, p. 11–16).

Women and men are different biologically, but all cultures and societies interpret and amend these differences in terms of a set of social expectations of appropriate behaviour and actions taken by them (UNIFEM, 2002, p. 188). The social roles assigned to men and women change over time, are culturally conditioned, and depend on ethnicity, religion, education, class, and the geographical, economic and political environments. Thus gender specifies a set of attributes and behaviours expected by society from men and women and builds their social identity (Klimowicz et al., 2009, p. 14). These expectations are translated into law, access to resources, and power relations between men and women. While societies differ in terms of expectations for women and men, in all there is an asymmetry, which is well established, but not static (UNIFEM, 2002, p. 188). Being a social construct, gender is not fixed, it is variable and depends on time, place and culture. Since the concept of gender includes all those features of men and women which are changeable and vary depending on social context, it thus contains everything that is variable and socially determined (Titkow, 2011, p. 41). Gender must be understood dynamically as a social practice, constantly created and reconstructed through the activities of women and men, as well as social institutions such as family, welfare state, and the labour market (Daly and Rake, 2003, p. 37, cited in: Warzywoda-Kruszyńska and Bunio-Mroczek, 2011). One of the most important contemporary changes is due to community of experience of women and men, the similarity of the resources available, and the roles they perform. The result is a multiplicity of images of women and men, which – when it comes to identity – can no longer be considered as typically masculine or feminine elements, and begin to be seen as common<sup>11</sup> (Siemieńska, 2011, p. 197).

If gender is the product of humanity and the social structures and relationships it has created, the status quo can be changed. But in order to change them, you first have to know the “content” of gender (Titkow, 2011, p. 41). Gender is deeply rooted in social institutions such as the family, the labour market, the media, the education system, and so on. Therefore, in order to bring about a change in the character of the relationship between the sexes, it is not enough to change the individual attitudes of specific people – you have to influence the social impact of the institution (Anderson and Collins, 1998, p. 83, for: Warzywoda-Kruszyńska and Bunio-Mroczek, 2011). Gender is the term for a theoretical perspective,

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11 This is changing in part, the specificity of the roles previously considered separate for men and women is blurring in the awareness and at the behavioural level, making them androgynous (Siemieńska, 2011, p. 197).



a source of the instruments needed for the analysis of socio-political phenomena and their transformation (Titkow, 2011, p. 37). Gender differences contain a hierarchy, and since gender is a relational term, which refers to the interaction between male and female roles, the study of one gender automatically entails study of the other (Barker, 1999, p. 391). Therefore, according to Anna Titkow (2011, p. 37) the category of gender is synonymous with the theoretical revolution in the manner of research not only of the situation of women, but of the whole of social life. Gender becomes a major category only when we examine the relationship between women and men, as well as the world of wider relationships, in which their lives take place (Bradley, 2008, p. 16).

Economics as one of the social sciences, opened up to the category of gender relatively recently, as a result, *inter alia*, of historical conditions.<sup>12</sup> The origins of economics as a scientific discipline are directly related to the creation and development of the capitalist system. Production processes then shifted from households to factories and converted to for-profit activities with the use of hired labour. The main focus of economics was considered to be the relationship between economic agents (England, 1993). This historically evolved tendency to focus exclusively on the relationship between the people in the market led to the complete omission of productive and reproductive work done free of charge for households, local communities, the non-profit sector, and the public, and therefore to miss the economic role of women (Albelda, 1997, pp. 160–161).

Some of the first economists dealing with issues related to gender are Gary Becker, Jacob Mincer and Solomon Polachek. In considerations called “new household economics,” they worked on the production, marriage, divorce, fertility and the division of labour between the genders. According to their model, men have a comparative advantage in the labour market, while women in activities related to raising children and running the household. These advantages are partly due to biological conditions, and partly to the different experiences (Becker, 1981). Their consequence, however, are lower investment in human capital made by women, and lower wages for their work (Mincer and Polachek, 1974). The models developed by Becker, Mincer and Polachek certainly bring gender into mainstream economics (neoclassical economics), but based on stereotypical assumptions. This approach contributes to an incomplete understanding of gender relations in the economy, but also in society. For a better understanding of these relationships, gender would appear to be a useful category. The use of the category of gender in economic analyses enables us to extend the understanding of economic processes and the operation of institutions by exploring ways to develop opportunities by people, their choices and limitations, which are affected by diverse and often conflicting factors. Exploring the ways of constructing universal categories can help in discovering methods to create and reproduce the social hierarchy and inequality (Barker, 1999, p. 395).

Both mainstream economic theory and the economic policy based on it, despite the fact that they appear to be neutral on grounds of gender, in fact, favour men.

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12 For more information, see Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2011.

This is because the concepts, theories and methodologies neutral in terms of gender often hide, naturalise, and protect the privileges of one of them. An illustration of this is the persistent pay gap between men and women. In neoclassical economics, this phenomenon is explained by the rational decisions of women. An analysis that takes into account the category of gender includes the social expectations of women and men. Women are seen as wives and mothers, and this in turn affects their employment decisions (Barker, 1999, p. 391). Critical economy, constituting an alternative to the mainstream, opens the possibility of developing theory and economic policies taking into account gender relations. The critical perspective in economics easily engages in an analysis of gender inequalities at the micro level. However, most progressive economists, despite the fact they view individual market participants by their gender (especially in the case of the analyses of households), do not define the market itself in a similar way, or relationships in companies, although both companies and the market can operate in a way that is particularly restrictive or unfair to women (Elson, 1994, p. 38–39). The monetary economy cannot grow without the unpaid contribution shaped by the structure of gender relations, which is ignored in macroeconomic aggregates (p. 40). Thus, information on production for their one's own needs, informal paid work, work for the household, as well as the work of volunteers, is essential for understanding the economy as a whole and the changes taking place within it (MacDonald, 1995, p. 164).

### 1.3. Instead of a conclusion – InnoGend and a definition of gender

‘Innovative Gender’ as a New Source of Progress (InnoGend) is a study designed to demonstrate the link between gender, the roles assigned to women and men in society, and the processes of creativity and innovation. The research aims to answer the question of whether gender translates into creativity and innovation, what are the symptoms, and whether state policy by supporting creativity and innovation processes actually take all these aspects into account. If the policy to promote creativity and innovation is neutral on grounds of gender, is it because gender does not play a role in these processes, or rather that the impact of gender is skipped? Understanding the relationship between gender, and creativity and innovation of women and men, and the influence of the state may be helpful in promoting progress and may even point to its new source.

Policies promoting creativity and innovation are gender-neutral. However, this neutrality may not correspond to actual relationships. If women's and men's innovation and creativity manifests itself in different ways, and a model based on only one gender is taken as a template, this assumed neutrality leads to the domination of one gender only, leaving the other in the shade, or even intro-

ducing obstacles to the process of creating innovation. If certain manifestations of innovation are made difficult, this will no doubt affect economic growth and development. Support for non-obvious manifestations of creativity and innovation may produce a comparative advantage, contribute to the progress of civilization, and also promote equality between the sexes.

The aspects to be highlighted as particularly important in the concept of gender are:

- gender is not only a property of individuals, but also a social phenomenon,
- gender is the social meanings attributed to the biological differences between the sexes,
- it is the cultural superstructure on biological sex, a complex of attributes and behaviours expected of women and men and perceived as useful in their social functioning,
- social roles assigned to women and men vary over time,
- the concept of gender includes all those features of men and women which are changeable and vary depending on social context, and thus contains everything that is variable and socially determined,
- gender is deeply rooted in social institutions and social mentality, often unconsciously, and is thus not subject to any reflection,
- gender differences contain a hierarchy, and because gender is a relational term, referring to the interaction of male and female roles, studying one sex entails also studying the other,
- gender to some extent determines the life choices regarding education, occupation, and interests, which may impede or prevent the realization of the individual's potential,
- it determines the direction of education and socialization, sets social standards, and contributes to the strengthening of stereotypes and prejudices leading to discrimination.

Therefore, our proposed definition is:

Gender is a time-variable social phenomenon, constituting the superstructure of biological sex, which is reduced to a set of traits, behaviours, attitudes, roles and attributes assigned by the wider culture to one sex and expected by society, appropriately from a woman or a man, as well as the closely related relationships between them, which includes a hierarchy. Gender is rooted in social institutions, which translates on the one hand into a lack of awareness, and on the other to its variability over time. Rooting gender in the social mentality, and its frequent unconsciousness, means that the average individual does not give this category any deeper reflection or consideration. The status quo is considered to be the norm, and the attempt to change it raises a general fear and resistance, just as feminist circles' fight in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to grant women the right to vote.

Gender research is not easy to carry out. In the first stage, we can just look for information on the activity of men and women in a specific area. However, reaching such information is not always easy. Data sets may not present data disaggregated by gender, because this element could have been considered negligible at

the stage of building the study. The absence of women (or men), however, may be due to social relations which statistics do not show. Thus selection of appropriate research methods is important, although it is not the only problem. Gender is a category that shows the relationship and the influence of social institutions on perceptions and the development through socialization of femininity and masculinity. The perception of such links is difficult, because it requires the researcher to understanding a relationship of which they are part.

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